

Testimony on H.B. 5005  
Appropriations Committee  
February 21, 2020

Hello Senator Osten, Representative Walker, Senator Formica, Representative Lavielle and esteemed members of the Appropriations Committee. My name is Win Evarts. I live in New Canaan with my wife and 29-year-old son who has an intractable seizure condition and I/DD. I am also the Executive Director of the Arc Connecticut, an advocacy organization dedicated to protecting the rights of individuals with I/DD and promoting opportunities for their full inclusion in their communities.

Arc chapters in Connecticut deliver \$100 million in jobs and supports to thousands of people in 162 communities. Together, they are the largest provider of supports and services for people with I/DD and their family members.

I'm here to speak about H.B. 5005, particularly the portion of the proposed bill that deals with budget lines that impact individuals with I/DD.

There are two initiatives in the proposed legislation that I urge you to change. The first one is the Governor's proposal to reduce funding in the Community Residential Services line of the Department of Social Services' budget by \$1.135 million and increase the Rent Subsidy line of the DDS budget by \$778,560. While we are highly supportive of creating residential settings that are the least restrictive to meet each person's individual needs, this "moving" must be done on a voluntary basis and the system savings that result must stay in the system and be used to support people who are waiting for services. Without these two conditions being met, this initiative, dressed up with progressive language, is effectively a budget cut, which hurts individuals with I/DD, especially those waiting for services, in an era of both current and projected fiscal health.

The second initiative is the proposed \$2 million cut to the Behavioral Services Program. This program provides support to individuals age 8 to 21 with I/DD and a co-occurring mental health disorder that substantially interferes with their functioning in family and community activities. While the caseload in this program may be declining, the programmatic assets used in BSP could and should be used to train community-based provider staff in behavioral health, or provide direct support to families that have been unable to find appropriate Employment Opportunities and Day Supports that meet the needs of their behaviorally challenged adult loved ones, or to expand the pilot for integrated supports that enables access to a wider variety of supports during a calendar day.

I will conclude by asserting that Connecticut is in a different fiscal place in 2020 as compared to at least the last 15 years when the state's fiscal situation weighed heavily on the nonprofit sector which currently serves 94% of the individuals with

I/DD. We support the proposal sponsored by the Connecticut Nonprofit Alliance to make a \$461 million investment over 5 years in community-based services. This investment is critical to the survival of the agencies that enable people with I/DD to live, work and participate in the full life of Connecticut's communities.

Thank you for your consideration and your service to the people of Connecticut.

Win Evarts, Executive Director  
The Arc of Connecticut, Inc.  
200 Research Parkway  
Meriden, CT 06450